

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
POLITICAL FEATURE NO. 1-1733
EDWIN GORDON/L.A.

OCTOBER 29, 1976

ELECTION '76: THE WEST

ANNCR:

ON THE EVE OF THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION,
VOA CORRESPONDENT EDWIN GORDON VIEWS THE SCENE IN THE WESTERN
PART OF THE UNITED STATES:

VOICE:

AS YOU MOVE WEST ACROSS THE GREAT PLAINS OF THE MIDDLE WEST
AND FIRST CATCH SIGHT OF THE HIGH MOUNTAINS THAT MARK THE
CONTINENTAL DIVIDE, YOU ARE ENTERING WHAT IS, FOR THE MOST PART,
FORD TERRITORY. AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THE PRESIDENT FEELS; AND OF
THE THIRTEEN STATES IN THIS POLITICAL AREA, ONLY ONE -- THE
PACIFIC ISLAND STATE OF HAWAII -- IS AT THIS TIME INDISPUTABLY
IN THE CAMP OF JIMMY CARTER.

BUT PRESIDENT FORD HAS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE IMponderables,
AND THAT MEANS THE STATES WHERE THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS SHOW
THAT ONLY ON ELECTION DAY, WHEN THE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED, WILL WE
KNOW WHICH WAY THE VOTERS ARE GOING. WHEN YOU MENTION THE
UNDECIDEDS OF THE WEST, YOU ARE TALKING REALLY ABOUT THE BIGGEST
POLITICAL PLUM OF THEM ALL -- THE MOST POPULATED STATE OF THE
UNION -- THE TRADITIONALLY MOST UNPREDICTABLE STATE -- CALIFORNIA.
IF THE CANDIDATES ARE EVENLY MATCHED THROUGHOUT THE OTHER PARTS
OF THE COUNTRY, THEN CALIFORNIA WITH ITS FORTY-FIVE ELECTORAL
VOTES COULD PLAY A ROLE IT HAS PLAYED BEFORE, THAT OF PRESIDENT-
MAKER. MISTER FORD -- AT THE MOMENT -- NEEDS CALIFORNIA TO WIN,
AND HE MUST TAKE SOME COMFORT THAT THE EDGE OF TWENTY PERCENTAGE
POINTS IN THE OPINION POLLS THAT JIMMY CARTER ONCE HELD IN
CALIFORNIA HAS NOW DWINDLED AWAY. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT BOTH
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN CALIFORNIA AS

THE CAMPAIGN WOUND UP. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT TWO POPULAR NATIVE SONS -- BOTH OF WHOM HAD PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS -- ARE NOW BEING HEARD ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES: GOVERNOR JERRY BROWN FOR THE DEMOCRATS, FORMER GOVERNOR RONALD REAGAN FOR THE REPUBLICANS.

THE CALIFORNIA VOTERS -- BECAUSE THEY ARE THE BIG PRIZE -- ARE BEING INUNDATED WITH TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPER PLEAS BY BOTH PARTIES, PERHAPS MORE SO THAN IN OTHER AREAS. AND WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO THE LINE IN THE VOTING BOOTH, THE FINAL DECISION WILL DEPEND -- ON ALL REPORTS -- NOT ONLY ON ISSUES, ECONOMICS, EMPLOYMENT, CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT, FOREIGN POLICY, BUT GREATLY ON PERSONALITY: THE INDIVIDUAL, SUBJECTIVE APPEAL GERALD FORD AND JIMMY CARTER HAVE FOR EACH VOTER. MISTER FORD MAY HAVE EXPECTED REPUBLICAN STRONGHOLDS NAILED DOWN, STATES SUCH AS IDAHO, UTAH, WYOMING, ARIZONA, BUT ANY VICTORIES THERE WOULD BE WIPED OUT SUDDENLY BY A DEFEAT IN CALIFORNIA.

(OPT) THE CALIFORNIANS ARE NOT ONLY MAKING UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT THE PRESIDENTIAL POST, THEY ARE ALSO CONSIDERING THE SENATORIAL RACE BETWEEN DEMOCRAT JOHN TUNNEY AND REPUBLICAN S.I. HAYAKAWA. THE INCUMBENT TUNNEY -- WHO HAS A LIBERAL VOTING RECORD -- AND THE SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD HAYAKAWA -- WHO DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A "REPUBLICAN UNPREDICTABLE" -- HAVE ENGAGED IN A SERIES OF PUBLIC DEBATES, BUT NEITHER HAS GOTTEN TOGETHER A DISCERNIBLE MAJORITY YET.

ANOTHER CLOSE SENATORIAL RACE IN THE WEST IS IN NEW MEXICO, BETWEEN LONG-TIME INCUMBENT JOSEPH MONTOYA AND FORMER ASTRONAUT HARRISON SCHMITT. DEMOCRAT MONTOYA CAMPAIGNS ON THE SLOGAN: "PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT." REPUBLICAN SCHMITT -- WHO FOUR YEARS AGO PILOTED THE LUNAR MODULE ON THE LAST MISSION TO THE

MOON -- HAS DOTTED THE SUNNY NEW MEXICO LANDSCAPE WITH BILLBOARDS READING: "HONESTY FOR A CHANGE."

ON THE GUBERNATORIAL LEVEL -- AN INTERESTING RACE IN THE NORTHWESTERN STATE OF WASHINGTON. DEMOCRAT DIXIE LEEY RAY SEEKS TO BECOME THE FIRST WOMAN GOVERNOR THERE. WITH CREDENTIALS AS FORMER HEAD OF THE NATION'S ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, SHE IS AN UNCONVENTIONAL AND COLORFUL CAMPAIGNER. HER REPUBLICAN OPPONENT, JOHN SPELLMAN, WHO IS AWARE HE IS NOT AS COLORFUL A FIGURE AS THE SIXTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD MISS RAY, SAYS: "IT'S A PERPLEXING PROBLEM, RUNNING AGAINST A FOLK HERO -- AND A WOMAN AT THAT." (END OPT)

AS FOR LOCAL AND STATE-WIDE ISSUES, THE MOST IMPORTANT -- IN TERMS OF VOTES THAT WILL BE CAST -- WILL BE THE NUCLEAR POWER INITIATIVES TO LIMIT CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. THEY'RE SHOWING UP ON THE BALLOTS IN FIVE WESTERN STATES AND ARE SIMILAR TO THE ONE DEFEATED IN CALIFORNIA LAST JUNE BY A TWO TO ONE MARGIN. IN BRIEF, THOSE IN FAVOR OF THE INITIATIVES SAY THEY WOULD PROTECT THE POPULATION FROM THE INDISCRIMINATE BUILDING OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WITHOUT ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS. THOSE OPPOSED SAY THE INITIATIVES -- IF PASSED -- WOULD STIFLE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW POWER RESOURCES, AND EVENTUALLY ADD TO THE COST OF HEATING A HOME OR RUNNING A FACTORY.

GH/RCS